

**In the Abstract**

**An amended Abstract is attached hereto.**

**ABSTRACT****COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK**

The invention provides ~~A communications network comprises~~ a plurality of core nodes establishing a multi-service transport network, and service nodes each coupled to a core node for providing access to the transport network. A network management system is arranged to define and manage one or more virtual public/private networks within the communications network. Groups of core nodes are configured as abstract nodes within which any available path may be selected to achieve a requested connection. End to end label switched paths are established via the management system by specifying a series of abstract nodes.